Dear Teachers,

“Why teach Holocaust history?” is a question that several professors at Jacksonville State University have struggled to answer. “Imagining the Holocaust” is one way we are attempting to teach Holocaust history and its importance to our daily lives because by teaching about Holocaust history we can learn about ourselves. This letter is to remind you of the “Imagining the Holocaust” writing competition taking place this spring.

Holocaust history is important not only for what it can teach us of the past but also for how it can enlighten us about our present. By learning about the rationalizations, prejudices, and stereotypes that made possible the deaths of millions of people between 1933 and 1945 in Europe, students are better able to recognize and think through the prejudices of their own societies and to develop tolerance to those who might be different than they are.

To this end, interested English faculty at JSU developed the idea of “Imagining the Holocaust,” a writing contest designed to teach Holocaust history and its continuing influence in today’s world. The latest competition will be open to many kinds of writing, from essays to more creative approaches in poetry and fiction. Entries will be due on March 1 of every year (when that date falls during the weekend, entries will be due the following Monday), and prizes, including U.S. Savings bonds worth $100, $75, and $50 to the top three winners in each category, will be awarded. The top winners will also be invited to participate in JSU’s annual Holocaust Memorial Commemoration in April.

Ultimately, the organizers of “Imagining the Holocaust” hope that through this educational project, students will better understand not just a facet of world history but also the power they have as individuals to make changes by refusing to continue the discourses of prejudice. To this end, we hope that you may find ways to work Holocaust education into your curriculum during the coming semesters or at least make information about the contest available to students you think may be interested.

Included in this mailing are two further pieces of information. One of them is a sheet of guidelines for submissions. There are general guidelines and specific ones for each type of entry. The other is the official contest entry form, a copy of which should be included with each entry and which includes the address to which all entries should be sent. Feel free to make as many copies as you need of both of these forms for interested students, and we would appreciate your posting information about the contest in a prominent place in your department and/or school.

Please contact Susan Ashley, contest coordinator, grades 9-12 (256.782-8483 or sashley@jsu.edu), Margaret Copeland, contest coordinator, grades 7 and 8 (256.782-5454 or mcopeland@jsu.edu), or Steven Whitton (256.782-5414 or swhitton@jsu.edu) at JSU’s Department of English for further information.